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NEWS RELEASE

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House passes Nethercutt amendment to accelerate and expand arming pilots, make program permanent

WASHINGTON – Today the U.S. House of Representative passed an amendment introduced by Rep. George Nethercutt (R-Wash.) to H.R. 4635, the Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act. Passing by a vote of 251-172, the amendment speeds up the implementation of the program by two months, eliminates the 2 percent cap on pilot participation and makes the program permanent.

The amendment was introduced with Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Joe Barton (R-Texas), and Robin Hayes (R-N.C.).

Nethercutt said he was concerned that the compromises made to get the original bill to the floor weakened its intent: to allow pilots to voluntarily arm themselves to protect their passengers and their aircraft.

“I believe that arming pilots is a strong deterrent, but felt that the limitations imposed by the Committee would cripple the program,” Nethercutt said. “Armed pilots are the last line of defense for passengers, and the bill would have left 98 percent of aircraft undefended. My amendment accelerates implementation, eliminates the arbitrary ceiling on pilot participation and makes this a permanent part of our aviation security program.”

The bill approved by the Committee would have established a limited program to arm a maximum of 2 percent of pilots, and would have been subject to review and termination by the Transportation Security Agency after two years. The Nethercutt amendment eliminated these provisions and requires implementation of the program within two months of enactment.

“Any pilot that is trained and eligible should not be denied the ability to fully protect his passengers. This additional layer of security will protect all Americans and will deter potential hijackers.”

Nethercutt asked Rep. DeFazio to exercise his status a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to offer the amendment during consideration of the bill to expedite its consideration. The bill passed by a vote of 310-113.

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